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More Colour Schemes

FOR THE MODERN HOME

by

DUNCAN MILLER

1938

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Introduction

Architecture and decoration are always evolving, altering their methods with the introduction of new materials, changing their direction to keep in touch with the changing conceptions of living. Even at periods when original work is at its lowest and antiquarianism is flourishing there is always some progress being made on the road from mud huts to something we do not yet know about. But any colour scheme one may choose must be chosen with the knowledge that it has been seen many times before. New colours do not get invented as new materials do. " This season's new colours ", advertised so regularly in the smart papers, means (if it means anything) " This season's new names for old colours " or " This season's fashionable colours ". And fashion can, by stressing certain colours and arrangements of colours, give an impression of novelty to some subtleties which have been in cold storage for a few years. But however original a colour combination may seem to anyone who has just discovered it, a walk round any of the national galleries will show him how often it has been used by painters in the past.

There is, in fact, nothing to be done that is new. On such well explored ground there should be no hesitations and doubts. And yet the average amateur, starting out to decorate a house, is more worried by the colour scheme than by any other part of his task. He will choose a dining table without too much difficulty. He will soon decide where there should be cupboards or lights. But while he has had to make up his mind between only two different designs of armchair he will try a dozen samples of material for covering it. Patterns of every colour and tone will be held up and discarded. When finally curtains, carpets and

covers are all chosen successfully for one room, there is a gre
temptation to repeat the colour scheme all over the house wit
only slight variations. It is too much trouble to start from th
beginning again with a new set of patterns to worry over and wit
the same uncertainty about the result. Few people in fact hav
coordinated their thoughts and preferences about colour. The
are groping with no sound basis for what they do, and gropin
sometimes produces results and sometimes does not. The
should learn a little of the uses of colour before trying.

It is as possible to have an educated palate in colour as i
anything else, and it is as possible to educate a palate. An artis
does not achieve his effects by hit and miss methods. He know
what effect a certain colour will have and he knows what othe
colour to use to heighten or relieve it. There are many ways o
getting the same effects, and each artist has colours he prefers an
uses more than others, but whatever it may be he wants, he know
how to get it. This is just what the average layman does no
know. He knows perhaps that he likes blue or doesn't like green
but there his certainty stops. The examples in this book have
been chosen to give an idea of what can be done and how various
effects can be got in various ways. It is possible to be restful o
strident, cold or warm, soft or hard, subtle or straightforward
formal or intimate—all within the limits of one person's prejudices.

There are many points to consider when deciding on colours
for a room, but the majority of them, once they have been
assimilated, are used without conscious effort. A good chef does
not have to think twice before deciding not to have fish and meat
both cooked with rice in the same menu, and he will even avoid
an appearance of sameness in the different courses. I once heard
of somebody in charge of a regimental mess during the war who
produced, as a *tour de force*, a meal in which everything looked
like a poached egg. One course was indeed a poached egg

another half a tomato upside down on mashed potatoes, and the sweet was half an apricot on rice. Presumably they all tasted different, but one can imagine the feeling of nausea by the end of the meal. That is the kind of mistake that can be made in a colour scheme by somebody who is not sure of what he is doing.

No one colour can in itself be wrong except on a personal basis. It is easy enough to say " I don't like pink " or " I hate blue ", but it is a remark which has no validity except for the speaker. There are no rules, even of taste, which can be laid down for such preferences. But in the value that is given to each colour and the way that they are used in juxtaposition there can be advice and warnings which have a general application.

During the last few years the neutral shades have had a long run of popularity. We crept out of the protection of this colourless period by tentative efforts in pastel shades. But now at last the primary colours are again being used. The Paris Exhibition was full of every kind of clashing colour scheme from all the countries of Europe. One wonders whether this change from the neutrality of 1928 to the discords of 1936 has any political significance. It is, however, interesting to remember that the last time there was a fashion for bright colours was in the years before 1914 after the arrival of the Russian Ballet. The cycle of taste has taken roughly 25 years to go round, and no doubt icing pink will be one of this year's new shades under some esoteric label. What causes these changes in taste it is difficult to say, but there is no doubt that the subtle blendings of pastel shades which seemed so clever a short time ago look a little faded at the moment. It will all happen again, of course, but meanwhile our attention is concentrated on strong colours. This needs courage, but one of the chief pleasures of using colours with courage (not with reckless bravado) is the unexpected subtleties to be found when the scheme is finished.

Types of Colour Scheme

There are four main types of colour scheme all of which are used all the time though fashion swings slightly from one to the other. They are to a certain extent overlapping, but nearly every room can be recognised as one or the other.

(A) THE BACKGROUND SCHEME

Background schemes are usually the result of either consciously or unconsciously planning the colour scheme of a room with reference to something which is not a part of the scheme. This something may be an object or series of objects, pictures or china which are always in the room, or it may be such temporary things as flowers and clothes which are expected to be there and are not always the same. The most usual " background scheme " is built round a picture, since pictures have definite colours of their own and therefore it is necessary to take them into account in planning a room. It is possible to do this in two ways. Either by making the room neutral in colouring and leaving the picture to stand out from its surroundings or by carefully dissecting the picture and using small areas of the colours in it to tie it to the room.

Derek Patmore's drawing room for Lord Jersey (Plate 1) is an example of a room in which the decorator has been content to let the picture speak for itself. Utrillo's dark reds are not echoed in the room, which is kept cool in colour and is a pure background.

In the Viennese flat by Liane Zimbler (Plate 17) the colours in the picture are used in the coverings of the chairs, not necessarily in anything like the same proportion as they exist in the picture but in such a way as to show their relation to it and to underline its importance in the room.

The planning of a room for a series of objects is less usual. It is done when the owner has a collection of china, glass or other objects which are worth displaying properly. Oliver Hill's sitting room for Lord Vernon (Plate 2) has obviously been considered from the point of view of the white china on each side of the fireplace. The weathered sycamore panelling throws them up and concentrates attention on them. There is also in this room a picture over the mantelpiece which the architect has considered as well, and he has tied the green which is its chief colour to the room by repeating it in the green stone of the fireplace. This room is particularly interesting in considering background schemes as it includes evidence of all types. In addition to being a neutral background for the china and an echoing background for the picture, it is also a room which to be at its best requires the bright colours which flowers or dresses and personalities give.

It is difficult to say what element in the decoration of a room shows that it has been designed to need occupation. But certain rooms when photographed appear to be self sufficient while others look empty and are only at their best when lived in. Oliver Hill's room calls for inhabitants, while Hayes Marshall's sitting room (Plate 8) does not need them. This is as it should be, since Hayes Marshall's room was an exhibition room in Fortnum and Mason's and was therefore planned to be seen and to get its effect when empty. Had it been part of a house, no doubt it would have been slightly different.

(B) MONOTONE SCHEMES

Some monotone schemes are backgrounds, but there is a type which does not demand pictures with bright colours, and even resents them. Such is Michael Dawn's living room (Plate 10). It is not possible to tell with certainty from a photograph, but it

appears that this room is so much an entity as it stands that it would not absorb any additional colouring and a picture might even appear discordant. Monotone schemes such as this were very popular during the early years of the present style of decoration. They give opportunities for innumerable subtleties while allowing the designer to concentrate on the lines of the furniture without interruption, but for the last year or two they have been less numerous. The number of subtleties to be got from the variations of one tone or tones of one colour is not unlimited and so more adventurous decorators have been using brighter colours and more of them.

(C) COLOUR SCHEMES BASED ON HARMONY

Such schemes are the easiest for people who are not quite sure of themselves. They have not the danger of looking dull which the monotone scheme has if it is done badly, and they do not need the sense of colour which is necessary to make a contrasting scheme a success. But, because it is the least adventurous, it is also the least interesting kind. People who begin with a sample of curtain fabric and then try to make everything else match are playing too safe. The result is nearly always without that element of surprise which gives life to a room. It is not a thing that professional decorators ought to do if they can help it, but unfortunately they are often forced to produce schemes by clients whose sense of colour is less acute than their own. In fact, many of them have given up trying to do anything else. It is not worth the trouble.

(D) SCHEMES OF CONTRAST

Strong colour schemes which contain clashes of colour are by far the most exciting, but they need courage and a sense of proportion. In a previous book I suggested that one way for the amateur to build up a colour scheme was to choose a picture or

a flower and use the colours in that. The chief reason for this was that painters often use colours together which would be considered entirely wrong by the kind of people who look for "colours that will go with each other". A clash, however, for which there is the authority of a good painter, cannot be dismissed so easily and an amateur can be far more courageous with such a backing. Of the rooms in this book Hayes Marshall's sitting room is an excellent example of a contrasting scheme and it succeeds by being daring. It is a curious thing that certain colour contrasts have become by constant use so accepted that people do not realise that they are contrasts and begin to believe that they are harmonies. Many of the flags of various nations are red, white and blue, and people have become so used by this to the proximity of red and blue that they are perfectly prepared to use them together. In the room I did for Lady Daphne Straight I have used red and yellow, two contrasting colours, which are not used much together in Europe but are a commonplace in the East.

One of the points in favour of these strong schemes is that the room very seldom looks dead and does not need the artificial aid of flowers to put it at its best, but the danger is that any particular group of contrasting colours may become fashionable for a time and wear itself out to such an extent that it becomes boring. This happened after the early visits of the Russian Ballet to England, when Bakst's colour scheme was self-consciously followed in house after house. It was impossible to go into any newly furnished room without seeing a black divan covered with cushions in purple, peacock blue and gold. The result was a general attack of optical indigestion followed by the reaction to neutral colours from which we are just recovering.

Colour Emphasis

There are two main methods of placing colour emphasis in a room and two definite kinds of artist produce them. " The designer " (which includes architects and people whose chief interest is in the actual furniture of the room) produces one type, while " the arranger " (the decorator who concocts a room out of ingredients already in existence) usually produces another type.

(A) THE DESIGNER'S ROOM

Where the design of the furniture is the chief consideration it will usually be found that the main blocks of colours are provided by the wood of the furniture and that the rest of the room has colours which will emphasise the lines and masses of which the designer is chiefly conscious.

In Maxwell Fry's Hampstead house (Plate 14), a good example of a room by an architect, although there is plenty of colour in the accessories, none of it is allowed to interfere with the wood, the colour and shape of which is the dominant feature. Serge Chermayeff, another architect, in the living room he has done (Plate 13), gets his colour emphasis in the same way. His room is made interesting by the use of various woods and varied fabrics. All these, which are slightly different, underline the shapes of the furniture which he wants underlined, and by their difference produce at the same time a general feeling of colour neutrality which acts as a background for the painting by Christopher Wood. Two rooms by people who are primarily interested in the designing of furniture are those by Bird Iles and Gordon Russell (Plates 3 and 4). Both are designed on the same general principle of a considerable mass of wood which forms one of the two main colours in the room and both have the same auxiliary

colour, which is blue. But while Bird Iles' room remains subservient to the colour of the furniture Gordon Russell has gone one step further and used curtains which have an existence of their own and are not there only to continue the colour of the walls as a background to the furniture.

(B) THE ARRANGER'S ROOM

Where the room is put together by someone who is purely a decorator the emphasis cannot lie on the furniture. The decorator is not responsible for the existence of the furniture, and although sometimes he chooses it, it will not have been designed for the room and he will not be conscious in the same way that the designer is of the importance of its lines. The decorator therefore tends to disregard everything in his colour scheme except what he himself is going to put into it. The result is that the important colours are the walls, the carpet, the curtains, and the chair covers. It is this type of scheme that the layman will probably have to produce and for this type it is better to have furniture which is not strong in colour. Nearly all furniture bought in the normal way is made of some wood such as oak, walnut, mahogany or sycamore, which can be disregarded in the building of a colour scheme. To buy a table in some rare and strangely coloured wood would present a problem which is difficult for the amateur, but the designer will often use odd woods in order to give to the furniture the colour emphasis that he requires.

Of the illustrations in this book, Bird Iles has used silky oak, which has much more colour than ordinary oak, Maxwell Fry has used rosewood, which is a deep reddish-brown, and I used pearwood, which is pink, in a bedroom (Plate 15) where the colour of the furniture was of primary importance. But where furniture was not important to the scheme, for example, Derek Patmore's

room for Lord Jersey, Marion Dorn's room for Diana Wynyard (Plate 12), the Viennese flat by Liane Zimbler, and Herman Schryver's dining room (Plate 21), the woods used are the usual ones which do not stand out by themselves.

Building Up a Colour Scheme

The majority of people when starting to choose a colour scheme cannot begin with an empty room but have to consider the furniture they already possess. It is therefore pointless to think of what would, in the abstract, be a good scheme without relation to the existing furniture. If the only things to be considered are tables, chairs and other permanent but indefinitely coloured things, the field is very wide, but often the chair covers do not need renewing and give a basis for the rest of the scheme. Even, however, with a clear field it is safer to consider the covers and curtains first, because fabrics cannot be mixed like paint and have to be chosen out of the limited range of existing colours and designs. It is quite useless to choose a carpet, paint the walls, and then start looking for material, the colour of which you know exactly in your own mind, but which, in fact, is not on the market. Before choosing curtains, however, it is important to know exactly what role they are expected to play in the final scheme. They can be made to do a number of things. They can continue the colour or tone of the walls, making an unbroken line round the room so that when they are drawn they sink into the background. They can be made by means of heavy pelmets to project into the room as a cupboard might, or when the material chosen has a decorative design they can be used as a mural painting or picture. Which of these courses to take depends partly on personal taste but largely on the relation between the windows and the rest of the room. If the windows are a good proportion in themselves and their relationship to the size of the room is right there is no harm in making a feature of them, but if they are ugly it is better to let them carry on the colouring of the wall in as

inconspicuous a way as possible. Once the curtain material has been chosen and its relation to the walls decided, the colour of the walls is the next thing to consider. In the great majority of rooms it is better that the walls should be lighter in tone than any other of the main colourings of the room. This is always safe, but it is as well to remember that a badly shaped room can often be pulled together by the use of a different colour on one or two of the walls. The colour of the floor is a part of the background of a room as much as the walls. When the bad proportions of a room are being hidden by the arrangement of curtains and walls the floor can be made to help. When the whole room is wrong the floor should be the same colour as the rest of the background. For practical reasons a carpet or even a wood floor will have to be a few shades darker, but never a colour which calls attention to its shape. In this way floor, walls and ceiling become a continuous strip and the dividing line between them becomes less noticeable. If the floor shape is good, but the heights and windows are bad, by accentuating the floor the eye is kept away from the defects and attention is concentrated where it should be.

It should be noted that all the strong and contrasting colour schemes in this book have a dark carpet as a basis. I have seen such schemes with light floors, but they rarely come off and are more difficult to do. This is probably because a good anchorage on the ground is a necessary preliminary to adventurous ideas. Many people who will always put rugs on a wood or stone floor will not try one on a carpet. There is no practical reason why they should, but the colour scheme sometimes calls for one. Hayes Marshall's sitting-room for Fortnum and Mason (Plate 8) has a dark carpet which weights the room in the right way, but there is also a light rug which covers more than half of it. Yet one is always conscious of the dark floor below. In this room there is enough colour already and a rug with a strong

Anyone who has a rug by one of the first-class designers—a Marion Dorn, a Léger, a Lurçat, an Ashley or one of the rare Picassos—should plan the room round it and follow its colours in the other ingredients.

Once the floor, walls and curtains are decided the chair covers and cushions are in hand for the important final touches. Here it is possible to take risks without serious consequences. A chair which has been covered a little too bravely can be made less conspicuous by hiding a part of its colour with a cushion. Hugo Gnam's living room in New York has two chairs covered in red on the outside and with a red and white design on the inside. In the photograph this design is more insistent than it probably is in fact because the chair is meant to be occupied. Anyone sitting in it naturally obscures the greater part of the design, leaving enough to effect its purpose.

One trouble the layman who is trying to build up an interesting colour scheme will find. That trouble is the love of the manufacturers, of the retail shops and, therefore, presumably (but only presumably) of the general public for a "three-piece suite"—a settee and two chairs—all covered in the same material. Half the best effects are got by covering the chairs in different materials. But few can afford to buy new loose covers to hide new fabrics they have had to pay for.

Cushions can play a very useful part in a colour scheme. They can add touches of brighter colour in cases where the room seems less alive than had been expected or where existing chairs are not to be recovered. They can also tie together rooms which are, as regards their main blocks of colour, disconnected. For example, a room has often to be furnished with odd chairs

covered in materials which were not intended to go together. A cushion therefore in each which echoes the colour and texture of another or that of the curtains will give a look of premeditation to what is really a mixed collection. In the room by Farmer and Dark (Plate 19) there is a rust-coloured cushion in a chair which appears in the photograph to have no particular reason, but it is, in fact, being used to tie together the schemes of three connecting rooms, all of which obviously cannot be shown in one photograph.

In choosing small objects for a room it is better not to follow too closely the colour scheme of the rest of the things. It has an oppressive effect to see everything too well thought out. In the sitting-room by Bird Iles (Plate 3) there is on the bookshelves a blue china horse which is the exact colour of the blue of the covers on the chairs. One can imagine the joy with which somebody discovered that it matched exactly. The result is a set piece which denies to the owner of the room any personality. Occasional objects, just like occasional tables, should have a wayward appearance.

I suggested at the beginning move in a cycle and that we are always therefore going over ground which has been covered before. The progress from monotone to schemes which harmonise and from them to strong contrasting colours is a regular one and when the eyes have got tired of too much colour, monotones start again; but there are, of course, variations in each cycle which produce differences within the various types of scheme. These variations are usually due to some outside influence. The last period of bright colours was due to the designers of the Russian Ballet and the colours were therefore the hot oriental colours which they brought. The next period, into which we are just entering, will be very different judging by the early examples. The colours being used are much clearer and brighter, and it is Picasso and the French painters and their disciples in other countries who have influenced them. As very few rooms have yet been decorated with such colours it has not been possible to include many illustrations. The Paris Exhibition, which will obviously be the model, whether consciously or unconsciously, for the taste of the next few years, has given the best opportunities for studying this trend. In room after room the French decorators proved their colour-sense, and by far the most interesting of the fabrics were the gay chintzes.

In the early years of the present style of decoration it was impossible for the decorator to find fabrics or wallpapers which fitted his idea of design. Before any movement becomes popular manufacturers cannot be expected to produce wallpapers or materials at reasonable prices for a small minority. It was therefore necessary to get one's effect for the walls by paint

which could be mixed to any colour and plain fabrics which had no design to date them. For the last few years in England and for longer in France there has been an adequate supply of curtain and covering material, but for some reason there have been no good wallpapers. The result is that wallpapers have been looked on as something entirely out of date and every room has been painted. But in Paris it was possible for the first time to see wallpapers which were designed to be contemporary with the rest of the decoration displayed. With this new field it is probable that there will be a great many rooms designed in the near future with wallpapers instead of painted walls.

As these strong colour schemes become more usual and more than one colour is used even on the walls there will gradually develop a struggle for originality which will end, as it has always ended before, in a return to simple schemes of shades of one colour. But that is some years off. There is a tendency in this as in everything else towards a speeding up, which means that the whole cycle of colour will be gone through each time rather quicker than before, but there is no doubt that progressive decorators will go on experimenting more with colour until they realise that their ideas have been taken up and mass-produced by the cheaper manufacturers. It is at that point that the reaction sets in and not until then need we expect any return to monotone.

There is no question of right or wrong as between various points of this cycle. A monotone scheme is just as good as a many-coloured scheme, but there is obviously a definite need, of which the public as well as the decorators are conscious, for change. The eye gets tired of looking at the same kind of colour scheme all the time and for this reason it is always necessary to be evolving from one type to another, although there is no question of improvement and no possible claim to originality.

I

DEREK PATMORE

Drawing Room for the Earl of Jersey

DEREK PATMORE: DRAWING ROOM FOR THE EARL OF JERSEY

Walls : pale green
Furniture : sycamore
Fireplace : grey stone
Chairs : cream piped with green
Curtains : white with green design
Rug : cream

The grey, green and cream of this room form a perfect setting for the dark vivid reds of the picture by Utrillo over the mantelpiece. It is fresh, light and restful and the grey stone of the fireplace is important as it underlines and offsets the freshness of the sycamore furniture. Although this scheme has no strong contrasts there is sufficient differentiation of colour for it to absorb the dark reds of the picture quite naturally. Bright coloured flowers could also be put here without damage to the general effect in a way that they could not in the room by Michael Dawn where only one colour is used. This is a room which has the virtue of looking cool in summer and warm in winter. It breaks no fresh ground and creates no precedents, but it is not everyone who asks for originality and this is a pleasant scheme of a type quite usual during the last few years.

2

OLIVER HILL

Sitting Room for Lord Vernon

SITTING ROOM IN LORD VERNON'S HOUSE, TRAFALGAR SQUARE, CHELSEA, BY OLIVER HILL

Walls : weathered sycamore
Floor : Australian walnut
Fireplace : polished buff Perrycot Portland stone and green African budd stone
Covers : ivory satin
Ceiling : pale green
Panel over fireplace : a flower piece by Gluck

This is a very carefully considered background scheme. It gives the effect of a period room on account of the furniture, but it has obviously been designed mainly as a setting for the china in the two niches and the flower picture over the fireplace. The china needed a formal setting and Mr. Oliver Hill has given it a very successful one. The various shades of colourless browns in the walls and floor, and the furniture and covers, knit with the play of light and shade into one colour, but the rug, which introduces them all, points the fact that they are different. The only other colour in the room is the green of the picture repeated in the mantelpiece and then hinted at again in the very light green of the ceiling. To be exciting this room needs another and a clashing colour, but, as with all schemes conceived as a background, this is expected to be provided by flowers or women's clothes. It has been designed, as rooms should be, to be at its best when in use.

3

BIRD ILES, LTD.

Living Room at Highpoint, London

LIVING ROOM AT HIGHPOINT, LONDON, BY BIRD ILES, LTD.

Walls and ceiling : very pale terra-cotta
Floor : natural cork, polished
Furniture : Australian silky oak
Curtains : string-coloured tweed
Covers : turquoise blue tweed
Cushions : tomato and string-coloured tweed
Rugs : brown, string and tomato

This room should be compared with the following one by Gordon Russell. Here also the wood has been used as the basis for the colour scheme—again with blue. Although both the wood and the blue used are different the contrast is an equivalent one. In each case the floor follows the tone of the wood—in this case in cork. But here one misses the role played by the curtains in the other room. The result in the photograph is too careful and self-conscious and lacks spontaneity by comparison. Everything seems to have been chosen a little too studiously. It should be lived in by somebody very untidy who leaves books about on the top of the shelves and obliterates the decorator's personality with his own.

There is a difference between this room and a purely background scheme such as Oliver Hill's (Plate 2). Background schemes are designed to need the kick given by a contrasting flower or dress. This room has plenty of colour in its own right, but the owner seems to have been afraid of obtruding himself in the frame that has been provided for him.

4

GORDON RUSSELL, LTD.

Living Room for Miss B. Dinshaw

LIVING ROOM FOR MISS B. DINSHAW, BY GORDON RUSSELL, LTD.

Furniture : walnut
Walls : light blue
Floor : dark brown
Curtains : light design on dark brown
Fireplace surround : natural travertine marble and stainless steel

This is a case where the wood is used for the dominating colour of the room. This often happens in modern schemes as lack of space means large areas of built-in furniture which cannot be ignored. The wood has therefore to become one of the basic colours of the general scheme. The pale blue walls are a strong contrast, and therefore Mr. Gordon Russell has carefully chosen a curtain fabric which forms a bridge between the two. It is strong in design but dead in colour, which results in the softening of the contrast between walls and woodwork. Though the mantelpiece and materials used for covering are neutral in effect, the mantelpiece and small chair have the warmth of the woodwork whereas the settee and easy chair tie up with the walls.

This room is similar to the one in Plate 3, by Bird Iles Ltd., in general idea, but there is here more evidence of the owner's personality, which is always needed to finish the scheme.

NAWAB SALAR JUNG BAHADUR

5

EDWARD B. MAUFE

Dining Room for Captain E. Beddington-Behrens

DINING ROOM OF CAPTAIN E. BEDDINGTON-BEHRENS' LONDON HOUSE, DESIGNED BY EDWARD B. MAUFE

Walls : yellow
Floor : polished wood
Furniture : Monel metal and ebonised wood (trolley in chromium)
Picture frame : black mirror glass with two silver bands

A dining room is a completely different problem from a living room. It is naturally much more formal and need never have the flexibility of other rooms. It need not be planned to accommodate the various objects that are bound to occur in other parts of the house. It is for a definite purpose and does not have such things as books left about in it. It is therefore an excellent place for a large panel, as in this photograph. The whole scheme can be arranged to provide a setting without danger of interruption. Here the yellow of the walls with the grey and black would, if the picture were not there, be too cold. But they provide the right background for the hot colours of the panel which is framed in black mirror. Two other paintings by Stanley Spencer are also in the room and the walls and furniture are, therefore, rightly made subservient to them.

6

HAYES MARSHALL

Dining Room for Fortnum & Mason, Ltd.

DINING ROOM FOR FORTNUM AND MASON, LTD., DESIGNED BY HAYES MARSHALL

Walls : white
Table : white wrought iron ; black glass
Chairs : ebonised mahogany, and rough yellow fabric
Rug : yellow with black and white design (a hand-made Donegal)
Curtains : black and white semi-glazed chintz

There is no attempt at subtlety in this. It is strong and straightforward but very effective. Such a colour scheme is at its best in a dining room, where fewer intrusions can be expected, for it would be difficult to introduce so much as a book without trouble. As in Captain Beddington-Behrens' dining room in Plate 5 the formality of the colour scheme is right for the formal purpose. It is a good example of the use of black and white as definite colours and not as neutrals.

In fabrics and paint almost any shade and combination of shades can be obtained. There is often, therefore, a tendency to be too clever where the obvious would be successful. Mr. Hayes Marshall has used a scheme which many people would disdain. Such a strong scheme is usually only attempted with glass or tiles, where the choice of colour is limited. This is a mistake. It is better to get hard effects with soft materials and try for subtler ones with hard materials, as in Plate 7.

7

KENNETH CHEESEMAN

Fireplace Group for the British Vitrolite Company

FIREPLACE GROUP DESIGNED BY KENNETH CHEESEMAN AND CARRIED OUT BY THE BRITISH VITROLITE CO.

Vitrolite is an opaque glass which is made in black, a milky white and a number of other colours. Most designers faced with the problem of a colour scheme to be made out of one material and the consequent restriction of choice it involves resort to very obvious and crude schemes. Anyone who has ever looked over blocks of flats and examined the bathrooms will realise this. Whether the bathrooms are tiled or panelled in Vitrolite there is usually the same idea—black and a bright colour. The virtue of Kenneth Cheeseman's scheme is that he has shown that subtlety of colour is just as possible in glass as with a variety of fabrics.

The delicate grey-blue and the cream are excellent together and they are shown to full advantage by the dark mirror which makes them warmer. The repetition of the grey-blue of the walls in one panel of the fireplace frames the decorative panel by Sigmund Pollitzer above and also ties the scheme together by continuing the background colour in another plane. The blue in the design on the panel emphasises the blue in the Vitrolite rather than the grey, while the red does the job for which, in small quantities, it is always useful—that of giving life to a scheme. The rich colour of the rug on the floor with its reflection in the glass provides the rough texture and depth of colour which glass cannot give.

8

NICOLAS DE MOLAS AND HAYES MARSHALL

Sitting Room for Fortnum & Mason, Ltd.

SITTING ROOM INSPIRED BY NICOLAS DE MOLAS AND ARRANGED BY HAYES MARSHALL FOR FORTNUM AND MASON, LTD.

Walls : pink distempered Hessian, sewn with string
Floor : dark rust close-cover carpet. Rug in light beige and grey, by Marion Dorn
Covers : yellow and coppery beige satin
Curtains : "Harvest" chintz (dot design of corn and sickles)
Cushions : prune and cerise satin
Overmantel : glass, with leaf design in painted wrought iron (the lower part of the glass is silvered)
Columns, below the book niches, of white plaster
Photomurals carried out by Mollo & Egan, London

There is real wit and lightness in this room, and real certainty in the way in which the colour values are handled. The two acids—the pink of the walls and the yellow of the covers—are contrasted in just the right proportions, and the soft copper beige of the other chairs softens the blow.

A strong note is provided by the rusts and reds of the cushions and the dark green of the leaf over the fireplace and the rubber plant in the corner. The dark floor and the low ebony table give the scheme stability and heighten the effect of the other colours. The light rug and curtains soften the whole and the dead white pilasters break up the mass of pink. The result is a gaiety which you would expect from a Frenchman but which is rare in England, where the old rules are not usually disregarded so light-heartedly.

This is obviously not, as it stands, a room for people with small incomes living in minimum flats, but the merits of the colour scheme are not dependent on the other features of the room. Similar courage would always pay.

9

ETIENNE KOHLMANN

Nursery in Paris

NURSERY BY ETIENNE KOHLMANN, PARIS

Walls : white in the night nursery
light and dark cream in the day nursery
Floor : blue rubber with a mat of warm grey ridged rubber
Curtains : green
Furniture : lacquered white ; desk and chair chromium and dark green leather
Covers : green and cream with pink check in day nursery and light blue in night nursery

When choosing colours for a nursery there is always a desire to get something light, gay and clean. The result is usually an array of pastel shades which look excellent for a few days and then become progressively dingier. No scheme of such colours alone can live up to the wear that a nursery gets. But the introduction of one rich colour gives the contrast of tones necessary to avoid this. It braces the scheme and gives it depth. Marks on the lighter surfaces do not show to anything like the same extent as they would if there were no contrasting colour. In this case the decorator has been clever in keeping the deeper colour, the strong green, mostly to the furniture which is not used by the children. His rubber floor is also excellent. There is no doubt that rubber is the best material for a nursery floor where colour is wanted. But it has the disadvantage of marking very easily. The main floor is therefore blue, but there is a strip of grey where most of the traffic is. This grey strip is of ridged rubber, which is hard to slip on and does not show dirt as much as a flat surface.

The result is a scheme with lightness and depth of colouring and the characteristic gaiety all nurseries should have.

10

MICHAEL DAWN

Living Room in Bedford, England

LIVING ROOM BY MICHAEL DAWN FOR HIS HOUSE IN BEDFORD

Walls : cream
Woodwork : cellulosed cream
Floor : nigger brown carpet
Illuminated map between bookshelves
Upholstery : honey-coloured velvet corduroy
Curtains : plain gold satin with corduroy pelmet

Here is an example of the use of different tones of the same colour. This is always safe and nearly always effective, but it means that everything in the room has to be carefully chosen. A blue vase, for instance, which in the average room would not be very noticeable, would here stand out to such an extent that it would become the most important thing in the room. It will be noticed from this photograph that even the flowers have been chosen to harmonise. In any monotone arrangement such as this texture becomes of the utmost importance. The ribbing of the velvet corduroy in this photograph stands out more than it would if it had been in a scheme of strong contrasts.

During the last few years a great many rooms have been done in monotone schemes. It was a natural thing that they should. A new type of design was being produced, and the people who produced them were more interested in their experiment with shapes than in arrangements of colour. They also wanted their experiments to stand or fall by their design. But now that the experimental stage is passed fewer monotone rooms are being done and bright colours are being used again.

12

MARION DORN

Sitting Room for Miss Diana Wynyard

MISS DIANA WYNYARD'S SITTING ROOM, DESIGNED BY MARION DORN

Walls : pale blue
Floor : dark brown
Rug : cream with blue design
Covers : cream
Curtains : blue and white fabric with an astrakhan yarn
Furniture : walnut
Painting is by Ian Campbell Grey

This room depends for its effects entirely on the qualities of the fabrics, both of colour and texture, as one would expect from any room designed by Marion Dorn. The two pieces of furniture are unimportant except that they provide a contrast, which might be provided equally by any dark piece of furniture, to the light colouring of the fabrics. The light blue and white of the rest of the room is delightful, but to look its best it needs the red which the flowers give to the photograph. I have no doubt that there always has to be red in this room in some form. The value of a light blue and a rich red together in a colour scheme is not often recognised. In fact, I have lately been accused of lack of colour sense for using it.

The whole effect is nicely inconsequent and is designed from the opposite angle to the architects' rooms. It is designed by a woman for a woman, and has the qualities one would expect of that.

13

SERGE CHERMAYEFF

Living Room in a London Flat

THE LIVING ROOM IN A LONDON FLAT, DESIGNED BY SERGE CHERMAYEFF

Walls : ivory
Partition : walnut
Floor : oak
Rugs : natural-coloured wool
Furniture : sycamore (white rubber top to table)
Chairs : covered in browns, blues and reds

This photograph shows a room which has obviously been planned by an architect. The partition wall panelled in walnut is made the important mass of colour and all the other colours used are related to that or the ivory of the paint. The walnut has its shelves lined with sycamore, and cupboard doors of sycamore, while there is a walnut skirting and mantelshelf to the other wall. The oak floor is lighter than the walnut and it, in its turn, has sycamore furniture. All the furniture, however, has a strip of dark bronze where it joins the floor, echoing the walnut skirting. The chairs and settee are all in different materials, but their general effect is neutral. This is particularly clever, as had they all been covered in one neutral fabric they would have been much more conspicuous than they are now. The whole room, in fact, plays up to the picture by Christopher Wood over the fireplace, which supplies the bright colour and rightly becomes the centre of the scheme. And then to prove that nothing is accidental, the red shade to the wall light brings the picture back to the rest of the room.

This is a triumphant example of a room which has apparently been put together in a light-hearted manner but has really been very cunningly conceived. The woods are all different, the fabrics all different, and yet the whole thing hangs together. It is the antithesis of the suite of furniture method of design which is always in danger of becoming a set piece.

14

MAXWELL FRY

Dining Alcove in a Living Room

DINING ALCOVE IN THE LIVING ROOM OF THE SUN HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD, BY MAXWELL FRY

Walls : cream
Floor : Australian walnut
Furniture : Bombay rosewood
Curtains : cream
Covers : small chairs : white leather
easy chair : dark brown

The important thing here is the large flat surfaces of wood which provide the main colour for the room and also dictate the accessory ones. The dark brown and reddish-brown of the rosewood door and furniture give a mass of warm colour, while the greyer and lighter walnut of the floor gives them no chance to appear sombre. The pinkish-cream walls and curtains are a natural corollary of the red in the rosewood, but they themselves call for green, which is provided by the cushion, some of the ornaments and the mural behind the dining table.

This is a colour scheme which is, unlike some, equally good by day or night. Designed by an architect, it uses its colours to stress its shapes and not to counteract them.

15

DUNCAN MILLER

Bedroom for Mrs. Shneerson

BEDROOM FOR MRS. SHNEERSON, DESIGNED BY DUNCAN MILLER

Walls : pinky beige
Floor : dark brown carpet
Bedspread : almond green
Curtains : cream
Furniture : painted to match walls with pearwood cupboard and drawer fronts. Stool and chair covered to match pearwood.

This scheme developed from the necessity of dealing with a great deal of built-in furniture in a small room. There is a large hanging cupboard on the other side of the room which is treated in the same way as the dressing table. Both have the doors and drawer fronts of wood. As these are always being handled it would have been impractical to paint them. To veneer all the furniture, even in a light wood, would have meant too much of one wood. So the carcase of each was painted. Then with the surfaces of the wood reduced to manageable proportions it was possible to choose a wood with a definite colour which would form an integral part of the scheme rather than be ignored by it. The chair and stool were covered in the same colour to pull the room together, and a rich brown carpet provides a solid base. The window was not such a good shape that it would stand underlining, so the curtains carry on the colours of the walls. When this was all finished the room needed something to give it life and avoid any danger of monotony. The bedspread was, therefore, made of almond green velvet which, as well as being a large area of colour, brought out the green in the glass shelves.

16

PIERRE DARIEL

Lounge designed for Dolt, Paris

LOUNGE DESIGNED BY PIERRE DARIEL FOR DOLT, PARIS

Walls : primrose
Floor : pinky brown with blue and white rug
Furniture : gilt metal
Covers : pale green and cerise
Screen : gold metal, white leather and dark blue stars

As with Hayes Marshall's Sitting Room (Plate 8), this should be examined as a colour scheme without considering the design of the furniture. Obviously, the furniture is not of a kind which would be useful to people of normal income. The pinky brown of the floor, the blue of the carpet and the green of the covers of the small chairs have all the same value and would make a scheme of harmonising colours by themselves. Into these have been introduced the deep purply-cerise of the chair cover and the bases of the statues and the dark blue of the stars on the screen and the picture frame, which add contrast and life to the scheme.

As with Hayes Marshall's room, black and white are used to underline the effect. In this case it is the zebra rug and the screen, but their function is the same as the pilasters and table of the other room. Both should be looked at together as they represent the same system of building a contrasting scheme but with different colours in use. Both also were exhibition rooms and therefore had to be self-sufficient and could not rely on accidental or temporary colours to help them.

17

LIANE ZIMBLER

Sitting Room in a Vienna Flat

SITTING-MUSIC-ROOM IN A VIENNESE FAMILY FLAT BY LIANE ZIMBLER

Walls : white
Floor : grey
Cupboard : oak with parchment panels
Covers : coral red
pale green, and
flowered chintz on brown

A typically Austrian room in its apparent artlessness. But it has actually been put together with a great deal of care. The basis of the scheme is the picture above the settee. The covers of the two large chairs follow this in the main outline, and the settee and the small chairs pick out certain aspects of the picture to underline—not necessarily the dominating colours. The freshness of the light wood picks out the main lines of the cabinet on the right from the mass which sinks into the background of the white walls. One cannot explain why the rugs are so exactly right. The whole room has a delicacy and grace which contrasts with the obviously heavy-handed quality of many modern schemes. The subtle use of clear colours is more difficult than using muddy or pastel shades in an obvious way, but there is no doubt how much better it is.

18

HUGO GNAM, Jr.

Living Room in a New York Apartment

LIVING ROOM IN A NEW YORK APARTMENT, BY HUGO GNAM, JR.

Walls : oyster white
Floor : dark brown
Panel : red and gold, with gold vertical stripes on the wall at each side
Metal : copper
Bookshelves : dark brown edges
Settee : dark brown moiré repp
Chairs : red, and red-and-white

This room is a warm and quiet one with no attempt at contrasts. The red chairs and the deep brown carpet, settee, furniture and bookshelves are colours which are, so to speak, in the same octave. The copper of the small table adds to the warmth. The walls are the only exception, but they underline the rest of the scheme. Had they been cream the room would have lost its crispness and become insipid. The two parts of the room are joined by bringing a little of each into the other. The red and gold panel and the gold vertical stripes, with the brown lines of the mantelshelf and bookshelves, stop the cold surface of the walls becoming too cold, and the insides of the armchairs are covered in a red and white material which again helps to tie the room together. This appears the only doubtful point of the whole scheme, as in the photograph the chair seems too strong and produces a note of restlessness. But it must be remembered that rooms are not (or should not be) decorated to look their best when empty, and the chair is probably not usually the focal point of the room.

20

OLIVER HILL

Bathroom at Gayfere House, for
Lady Mount Temple

THE BATHROOM AT GAYFERE HOUSE, LONDON, BY LADY MOUNT TEMPLE AND OLIVER HILL

Walls and ceiling : grey mirror
Floor : black Belgian marble
Bath and basin : lined with gold mosaic
Stool seat : gold-sprayed satin
Blue glass includes Venetian, English, Irish and Czechoslovakian specimens

Once the walls of a room have been covered with glass the problem of colour is a difficult one. One small spot of colour is immediately reflected backwards and forwards until there appears to be a polka dot design all over the walls. In this room, therefore, Oliver Hill has had to be very careful only to use his colours in small quantities. The vase of flowers and bottles appear two or three times in the photograph. The result is that there is the right amount of blue, while had he put what might have seemed on paper a reasonable proportion it would have swamped the room.

Many people dislike the idea of colours in a bathroom, feeling perhaps that the early morning is no time to face brightness in any form. And it is true that any adventurous scheme would not be altogether happy in a bathroom. But any arrangement not too disturbing which will warm the room is worth trying.

21

HERMAN SCHRYVER

Dining Room in a London House

DINING ROOM BY HERMAN SCHRYVER

Walls : pale grey
Floor : elephant grey carpet with Ispahan rug
Curtains : grey shot with silver
Table : mahogany
Chairs : painted blue-grey and pale grey
Covers : blue and cream stripes

This is an example of attention to detail in a colour scheme. It is cautious and made up, like a doctor's prescription, of exact quantities. I wonder how much of its effect would remain if the table were not laid. (Hayes Marshall's more virile ideas of colour in Plate 11 do not need this aid.) In fact, it depends for its cohesion on the flowers and the table decoration ; red poppies, for instance, would kill the room. But of its type of colour scheme it is a good example. It is, however, of a kind which has no relation to modern life and would only be possible with period furniture. The room is, rightly, designed round the Sheraton table, and the delicacy of its design has communicated itself to the colour scheme. But the resulting effect is fragile and dangerous for anyone except an expert working with expensive ingredients to attempt.

22

DUNCAN MILLER

Sitting Room for Lady Daphne Straight

LADY DAPHNE STRAIGHT'S SITTING ROOM, BY DUNCAN MILLER

Walls : yellow paper with a white line *Curtains : lacquer red glazed chintz*
Furniture : ash *Lamp : white plaster*
Settee : covered in dark green hopsack *Floor : brown carpet*

This is one of the smallest rooms in a large house converted and modernised by David Pleydell-Bouverie. As it is not the principal sitting-room there was no need to think of formal occasions. It had to be comfortable and to look comfortable. As the room faced north this meant above everything else that it had to be warm. The yellow for the walls was chosen first to give an appearance of sunlight. Because the room is very high a paper with a design on it in white was used in order to avoid a large area of plain yellow. The dark brown of the carpet also helps to make the room look lower than it might otherwise. The red curtains help to make warmth, and a connecting link between them and the wall is provided by the pinky cream of the ash furniture. The dark green settee gives the note of inconsequence needed to stop the whole scheme looking too static and careful, but yellow cushions tie it to the rest of the room. The textures here are important to the colour scheme. The particular red chosen is one that has more association with warmth when it is shiny, while the dark green on the other hand would have been cold if shiny and is warm because it is thick and woolly.

24

HAYES MARSHALL

Dining Room for Fortnum & Mason, Ltd.

DINING ROOM DESIGNED BY HAYES MARSHALL FOR FORTNUM & MASON, LTD.

Walls : plaster colour
Table and sideboard : ox-blood red lacquer with black glass tops and brass metalwork
Curtains : yellow
Net curtains : pale blue
Chairs : black with rough yellow and red covers
Decorative glass screen by Max Ingram
Photo-mural by Mollo and Egan

The interest of the scheme of this room is its logical growth from the furniture which is its basis. The dull red of the table and sideboard is carried into the covering of some chairs, and then, because too much red would become oppressive, the rest of the chairs are covered in bright yellow. This bright shade, which contrasts well with the slightly sombre red, is repeated in the curtains. The curtains and furniture are joined in this way through the chairs. The black tops give solidity to the whole room and introduce the photographic mural and screen into the scheme quite naturally. Up to this point everything is logical, and then Hayes Marshall has introduced an apparently incongruous note in the light blue net curtains, which lifts the whole scheme out of the ordinary.

DINING ROOM OF MR. HAYES MARSHALL'S HOUSE AT STANMORE, MIDDLESEX

Walls : rough ivory
Floor : red hand-tufted Dutch carpet with white border
Furniture : light oak
Curtains : red and white velvet
Covers : yellow hellene (a coarse woven fabric)
Horse's head in white glazed pottery by Colet Gueden
Wall vases for lights or flowers in plaster

This is a charming, fresh scheme and is particularly interesting as it shows what a professional will do when he has no customer to interfere with him. The room is simple and unaffected and obviously right for what it is—a small dining room in the country. The use of bright red and white is ingenious—the walls making an all white area, the carpet an all red area, while the curtains are a mixture of both. With its unselfconscious table and chairs the room is a perfect background for leaves or flowers. The plant in the window repeats the green of the garden outside and recalls it at night when the curtains are drawn.